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ABSTRACT

Intended to suggest types of early childhood education programs which may be implemented in rural areas at reasonable cost and which capitalize upon the rural environment's unique characteristics, this booklet describes 12 programs (many of which use Elementary and Secondary Education Title I or III funds) currently operating in rural areas. The practices are divided into 3 general categories, according to primary emphasis: (1) parent involvement in home learning, (2) group teaching practices, and (3) special programs. Relying on active parent involvement in the home, the first category consists of such program areas as early identification of learning disabilities, teaching severely handicapped children, and preparing young children for the classroom setting. Designed to provide young children in rural or migrant areas with group social experiences outside the home, the group teaching practices involve such diverse elements as bilingual educational training, creative toys and games, and a learning center on wheels. The last category includes a program, not yet in operation, which has proved successful in testing stages, and one which lacks a distinctly rural emphasis. However, both offer potentially adaptable models. Each description includes: program title, location, needs, developmental history, implementation considerations, vital statistics, evaluation, and contacts for further information. (NQ)

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early childhood education

promising practices in rural areas

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INTRODUCTION

The very young child acquires skills and expectations about the world continuously and at a staggering rate. However, learning cannot take place in a vacuum. If the environment or the child's experiences are not conducive to learning, the acquisition of knowledge will be minimal. Recognizing that learning patterns are often set when the child is very young, educators, psychologists, and other behavioral scientists have turned a great deal of attention recently to growth and development in the early years. One result of this focus has been an increase in programs for children and parents, from infancy through the early school years. Results from these efforts clearly indicate that the early years of childhood have a paramount influence in determining the degree of competence that will be evidenced as an adult.

This booklet is published by the Rural Education Program (REP) of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in cooperation with the National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education (NFIRE). It is published in the hope that rural communities will find the experiences of others helpful in developing early childhood programs of their own. Twelve programs currently operating in rural areas are identified and described herein. The descriptions are intended to suggest types of early childhood education programs that may be implemented in rural areas at reasonable cost and that capitalize upon the unique characteristics of

the rural environment. The descriptions are based on information provided by the project directors.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THE RURAL SETTING - A DISCUSSION

Rural areas frequently do not provide early childhood education, including kindergarten programs. Getting young children together for group instruction and training in sparsely settled areas is often difficult; transportation is expensive and dependent on weather conditions, local financing is limited, and the distance from the resources of universities, state and regional centers has curbed development of the specialized programs needed for early childhood education. Despite these problems, however, some positive steps have been taken. The practices described in this booklet illustrate the use of the unique qualities of the rural environment in offering meaningful early childhood education opportunities.

Studies of the effectiveness of various types of early childhood programs indicate that home-based programs are both productive and practical, and that increased parent-child interaction results in greater retention of both skills and knowledge. As parents become more aware of the development needs of their own preschool child, they become more able to help other children in the family. Organized group programs can only supplement the enormous influence exerted by the child's parents.

The use of home-based models for early childhood education is particularly suitable in rural areas. The home is a site that is already available--no extra space is required. The parents learn how to more effectively "teach" their child through the assistance and support of a trained home visitor. The home visitor comes to them, eliminating the need to transport children long distances. The home visitor can also bring resource materials (books, games, toys, etc.) which can be rotated among many families, thereby reducing costs. The home visitor can also serve as a link to existing regional resources, local agencies, colleges, centers, social service organizations, etc. A home-based program merges the world of the home and the world of the community and capitalizes upon the strengths of both.

On the other hand, a group program provides young children with the opportunity to interact with their peers and learn certain types of social skills that are more difficult to learn at home. In order to develop these skills, children need to deal with others of the same age and size.

A group program might be carried out part of the day several times a week. These programs offer an environment that is child-sized and manageable, where a child can practice skills with a minimum of frustration and a maximum of adult support.

A major feature of these promising practices is flexibility. By combining group activity with home intervention, for example, a community can provide highly effective early

childhood education. It is important to remember that tremendous variations exist between communities. A program in one community may not work in its entirety in another. It is important to determine which elements of the program will fit the unique needs and characteristics of each community. In order to work most effectively, these programs should be tailored to the needs and concerns of all persons involved.

Early childhood education programs provide a better chance at the beginning.

In the following sections, the steps taken in compiling this booklet are described, and an explanation of the format used to present the practices is offered. A concluding chapter sums up our observations. This information may serve as a beginning step towards implementing an early childhood education program in your community.

A DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

Several steps were involved in compiling the information for this booklet. First, NWREL contracted with Educational Coordinates Northwest in Salem to conduct a search for promising practices. The program could be center, school, or home-based. Basic criteria for including practices were:

1. The program is designed to overcome the limitations of small size and remoteness.
2. The program is designed to use the resources of the rural environment and to take advantage

of the unique characteristics of rural communities.

3. The program is designed to promote growth and development in young children rather than being only custodial.
4. Evidence exists that program activities are related to a rationale or philosophy regarding growth and development.

Ray Talbert of ECN contacted appropriate personnel in all State Departments of Education and requested information on programs that might meet the criteria.

Information provided by the State Departments was screened and project directors of those programs which seemed to meet the criteria were contacted. Small honoraria were offered those willing to complete an outline designed to provide more detailed information. This information was screened, and final choices for publication were made. Personnel from those selected programs were again contacted and asked to write, for additional honoraria, final reports according to a format developed by ECN. Finally, these reports were routed to NWREL for screening, editing, and publication.

The practices selected all have one or more of the following emphases:

1. Inclusion of community, home, and parent involvement;
2. Effective selection-admittance criteria;

3. Linkage with outside resources, e.g., social service agencies, community colleges, state educational offices, etc.;
4. Procedures for staff development (professional or volunteer);
5. Shared resources and services between programs or communities;
6. Development and utilization of creative resource materials;
7. Innovative use of facilities;
8. Articulation with school entry;
9. Coordination with school programs.

In addition, these programs meet other specific criteria:

1. They are relevant and useful for the majority of small schools.
2. They can be implemented in rural communities with primary reliance on the funds and resources normally available.
3. They are of such a nature that it is possible to identify indicators of success.

These are practices that work! Although some are tailored to fit particular geographic and industrial constraints, they can be adapted to fit local conditions in other areas.

FORMAT

The practices have been divided into three general categories, according to primary emphasis. These categories are:

Parent Involvement in Home Learning

These programs rely on active parent involvement in the home prior to their children's enrollment in the public schools. These programs deal with such areas as early identification of learning disabilities, teaching severely handicapped children, and preparing young children for the classroom setting.

Group Teaching Practices in Rural Areas

These programs are designed to provide young children in rural or migrant areas with group social experiences in a setting other than the home. They involve such diverse elements as bilingual educational training, creative toys and games, and a learning center on wheels.

Special Programs

In addition, we have included descriptions of two programs that may be of use or interest. One of these has not yet been put into operation, but has proved successful in testing stages. The other program lacks a distinctly rural emphasis. Both, however, offer potentially adaptable models in early childhood education programs.

Each description follows the format presented below.

TITLE OF PRACTICE

DISTRICT OR SCHOOL
LOCATION

The summary is a brief description of the program. It gives the reader an overview.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

This part of the article spells out the program's rationale, along with a description of the community's needs or problems. When appropriate, background information is included.

History of Development

This is an overview of the development of the program, along with its history vis-a-vis the community. Though it is only a summary, this section includes information which might be helpful to someone interested in using the practice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The practice in operation is described.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This is a discussion of any specific problems that need to be taken into consideration, e.g., providing transportation, maintenance and distribution of special resources, etc.

VITAL STATISTICS

Cost factors, equipment needs, reference material, and special staff training needs are listed here.

EVALUATION

This is a summary of evidence that the practice does make a difference and that communities adopting this practice can expect certain kinds of results.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

In some cases, additional information may be needed. Contact the persons listed here.

These programs are presented in an effort to stimulate thinking on what is possible. Before any program is adopted, there needs to be a careful evaluation of local needs and resources. Hopefully, this booklet will help in the search for alternative ways to enhance learning opportunities in the early years.

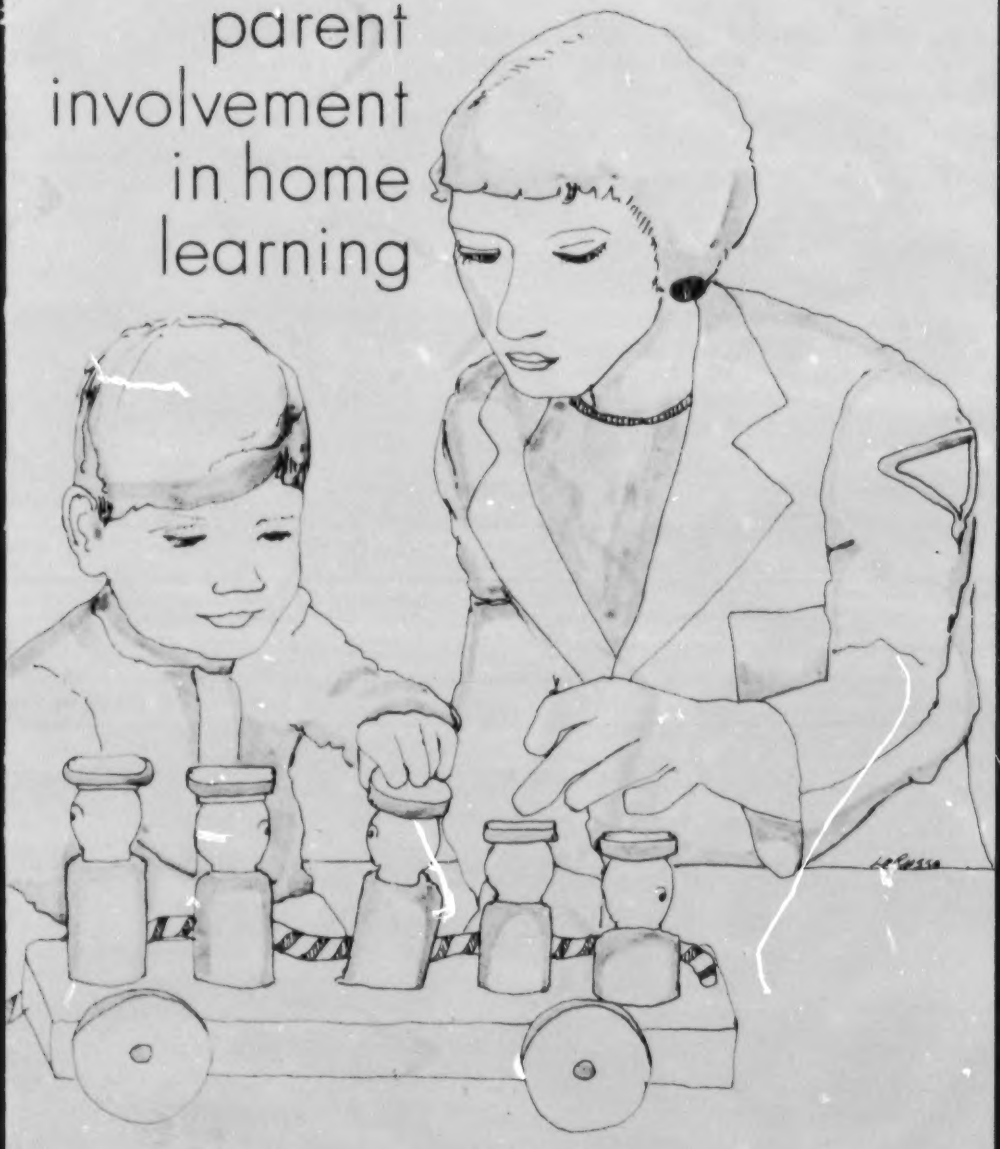
NOTE:

Many of the practices described in this booklet use funds provided by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I or III. ESEA was signed into law in April, 1965, and provides federal aid to experimental or compensatory educational programs.

The purpose of Title I is to provide financial assistance to local school districts that serve areas with significant concentrations of low income or educationally deprived children. Title III provides funds for innovative or exploratory programs in a number of different education-related areas.

Persons interested in more information about Title I or III should contact their regional educational service agency, the department of education in their state, or the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C.

parent involvement in home learning



TOY LENDING LIBRARY

MURRAY SCHOOL DISTRICT
MURRAY, UTAH

The Early Childhood Education Program in the Murray School District involves preschoolers, ages 2 to 5, in a 1½ hour per week creative nursery program for eight weeks. The parents of these children participate in a training course which includes discussions of child development problems and the use of special materials and take-home games and toys that emphasize creative instructional activities. Parents also have access to films and books on early childhood development. Those who are unable to attend receive instructional visits in their homes.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

Due to a variety of factors (economic inability, lack of awareness or resources, inadequate training or understanding of child development techniques) many parents are unable to provide the kinds of experiences that enrich a child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth. Because of these and other reasons, there is an urgent need to provide compensatory learning opportunities for preschool children

and training for their parents in situations where such opportunities are limited.

Overall, there is a need for stronger bonds between parents and children, more positive self-images in preschool children, and development of some of the skills needed for later success in school.

History of Development

The Toy Lending Library (Early Childhood Program) started three years ago as an innovative program open to all the parents and preschoolers in the school district in Murray, Utah.

A number of years ago, this district field tested the toys developed by the Far West Laboratory and, as a result, received 60 complimentary sets of each of the eight basic toys. These were put to constant and productive use.

Later funding (Title I) for the program required that participants from the district meet some sort of eligibility requirements--minority, low income, learning or physical handicap, etc. There were a number of children in the district who fit the criteria and, as the program developed, it was modified and expanded to fit their needs.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Although the program is conducted in one particular school, it is available to any eligible parents in the district. Classes are offered fall, winter, and spring

during mornings and afternoons on different days of the week. Once eligible children were identified, a total of 130 enrolled in the class program. Seventy-eight parents are involved, and 18 families with 29 children are visited in their homes.

On a typical day, the parents bring their children to the Toy Lending Library (a former kindergarten room) at 10 a.m. or at 1:30 p.m. Events for the parents are held in a separate room.

Each parent is assigned a toy bag to carry their toys back and forth for the course. All toys are numbered. They also receive a folder for written materials and instructions.

Back-up toys are available for weekly check-out. Preschoolers make their own selections. A special file is kept, indicating who borrowed which toy and when.

The instructional activities for the children include verbal language development; concept perception in time, space, and number uses through manipulative basic toys; orientation to a small group situation within the school; and creative art and music activities.

The parent classes include role playing, discussion, filmstrips, and tapes on a variety of subjects. These cover school readiness, verbal expression, manual expression, discipline, praise, social development, fears and anxieties, communication skills, building strong emotional health, creativity, and self-image, as well as specific topics of concern, such as thumb-sucking, toilet training, sleep habits, sibling rivalry, etc. The entire series of the sound filmstrip set, "The Parent and the Developing Child" (USBE) has been shown

and discussed. Several books have been suggested for the parents, including Bell's Your Child's Intellect, Ginott's Between Parent and Child, and Gordon's Parent Effectiveness Training.

The staff is composed of two teachers with backgrounds in early childhood development and a certified kindergarten teacher assisted by two aides.

Each parent fills out a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the course offering any suggestions or insights that might be useful for future sessions.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

One of the most difficult problems has been finding eligible families and getting them to enroll. Informal surveys of classes and school records, combined with the cooperation of elementary school teachers in the district, have partially solved this problem.

Keeping the classes casual and informal encourages continuing parent attendance and participation. Follow-up calls and home visits are often advisable.

There are a number of educational materials available to supplement program instruction. Both the Modern Film Library and the Far West Lab offer tapes or free films pertinent to early childhood education.

VITAL STATISTICS

The budget for the Toy Lending Library includes provisions for basic toys, filmstrips, cassettes, back-up toys, salaries, bags, books, folders, initial equipment, booklets for setting up the program, and school supplies. The cost for these items has varied between $9,000 and $13,000. Among the most expensive items are the sets of basic toys which cost approximately $60 per set. However, it would be possible to rotate 20 sets among 50 or 60 people as the toys do not have to be used in a specific order.

For the most part, program personnel are well acquainted with early childhood materials and the particular problems of the district, as they have been with the program for some time.

EVALUATION

One purpose of the program is to give disadvantaged and regular students equal starts or chances for success in school. Results of the Test of Basic Experiences (TOBE), administered to kindergartners in the district, showed "no significant difference" between regular students and program participants.

Other tests on parent growth were administered by a local university, but the results are not yet available.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Nancy Anderson
Toy Lending Library
1165 Range Road
Salt Lake City, Utah 84117
(801)262-8103

Murray School District
c/o Dr. Nellie Higbee
Toy Lending Library
147 East 5065 South
Murray, Utah 84107

HOME-SCHOOL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN RURAL ALASKA

DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
DILLINGHAM, ALASKA

Involvement with parents in the home environment is the strength of this program. Home visits by the early childhood specialist help convince native parents of the school's concern for their child's welfare. Parents are shown how to work with their own child for optimal social, perceptual, and physical development. Developmental toys and games are provided for the children's use at home. Once or twice a week, the child and one parent come to the early childhood center at the school, where a collection of materials and activities are available. Parents are taught how to prepare their child for later school experiences, and the children play and interact with other preschoolers.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

Many factors (geographic isolation, poor communication, and unreliable transportation, particularly in winter) contribute to the inadequate preschool preparation received by children in this district. The area is very remote, served only by air and summer barge traffic and, as a result, children are not able to develop a wide base of experiences

or skills. Cultural factors in the home contribute also to problems in language readiness and poor self-concept.

History of Development

The program was created under a Title I grant and resulted from the recommendations of parents in the community. The Head Start program which existed previously in Dillingham had to be terminated, due to busing costs and limitation of funds. Parents wanted a replacement for that program and the Home-School Early Childhood project filled that need.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The instructor is scheduled for half time in the school and the rest of the time visiting in the homes. The school provides a room for developing materials and activities for the project.

Visits to individual homes are made for the purpose of suggesting better health care for the child and working with parents on ways to improve language ability, perceptions, and social skills. Developmental toys are left as inducements to participate in program activities.

At the center, the specialist schedules classes with three to five students and their parents. Using materials such as a small slide or a balance beam, this specialist can help test and develop physical skills in the children. Perceptual development is encouraged with the use of form boards, puzzles, etc. Using such toys as miniature furniture,

social activities are incorporated into cooking, cleaning, and child care concepts.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

One problem in Dillingham has been that parents had an overwhelming expectation that the early childhood program would be like Head Start. Some parents were expecting free babysitting service and were disappointed when their child was scheduled in the center only once or twice a week. This was solved by educating the parents to the purposes of the program. Engaging in some preliminary public relations might be helpful in dealing with this problem before it occurs.

Another problem has been that the children wanted to attend each day and often came whether or not they were scheduled. Again, a clear understanding ahead of time is necessary to resolve this problem.

Transportation has also been a problem in this area. A solution to this has been to provide a taxi for those children whose parents cannot bring them to and from the school. A school car or taxi is also available for the specialist's use.

VITAL STATISTICS

The instructor's salary for the year has been $11,652. Approximately $5,000 is needed for transportation and all materials. The school provides the room at little additional

cost. The funding for the past year has been entirely with Title I, ESEA.

As the chief ingredient for success is the early childhood specialist, it is important that this person be enthusiastic about assisting children with this type of preschool experience.

EVALUATION

The evidence of success is empirical. Parents have steadily grown more supportive of the program. At the end of the first year, the local parent committee was overwhelming in its support and recommended continuation of the program.

The development of individual children is quite observable. Many who were extremely backward began to come out of their shells, communicate successfully, and interact with other children.

The most significant growth has been in social areas and in accelerated language development. A change of attitude in the parents, particularly in those who were initially hostile, indicates that there is great appreciation for this service.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Mr. Charles R. White, Superintendent
Dillingham City School District
Box 202
Dillingham, Alaska 99576

PROJECT HOME BASE

YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT
YAKIMA, WASHINGTON

Project Home Base emphasizes that parents are the first and best teachers of their children. Parent educators, in weekly home visits, explain to parents of young children about child development techniques and show them desirable teaching behaviors. Parents, usually mothers, are given tasks to work on with their children regarding language, perceptual, and intellectual skills. The assistance of a psychologist is also available upon request.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

Yakima, Washington, is a large agricultural center which relies on a great deal of seasonal labor. As a result, both unemployment and public assistance payments are high. Families who fall into poverty categories are scattered throughout Yakima County. It is often difficult for them to obtain any kind of exposure to early childhood education. By sending parent educators out into the field, Project Home Base is able to reach these families and help them learn to develop educational practices for their young children in the home.

History of Development

Project Home Base is an offshoot of another home-centered teaching approach that has been used previously in Yakima for school-age children. This program followed the same basic format as Project Home Base, only it involved the parents of students who were already enrolled in school. Staff members of this earlier project (the Follow Through Program) identified 400 homes with preschool children whose parents could use the same services.

Parents determined areas in which they felt their child needed special help and either sought this assistance from local agencies or requested it from the Follow Through Program.

Project Home Base was set up in 1971 and received initial funding through ESEA, Title III, Section 306. During 1975-1976, the program will serve as a Developer/Demonstration Title III, Section 306, program to help and train possible adaptors of the home-centered approach to early childhood education.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Project Home Base, which began in 1971, serves 200 parents and their preschool children. Project activities center around a weekly visit to the home, made by a paraprofessional parent educator. These visits are made during the day and, as a result, it is generally the mother who is involved in working with the child. During this visit, the educator and the parent share observations of the child's

developmental needs. The educator leaves a list of home learning activities with the parent. These include suggestions for teaching specific tasks to the child, as well as providing information about such things as child growth and development, health care, and nutrition.

Information about child growth and development is also presented during periodic meetings of target group mothers. These meetings are held in private homes and, generally, half a dozen mothers who share common concerns discuss these with project personnel. Large meetings to which all mothers are invited are usually held in a church and feature consultants in areas related to the development and education of young children.

The services of a project psychologist are also available to parents on request. The psychologist works with parents in their homes and helps them assess and meet the developmental needs of their children.

Home learning tasks are the only materials which comprise an integral part of Project Home Base. Over 200 tasks have been produced by the project during its operation. Each task is designed to develop specific language, perceptual, or intellectual skills, and each is aimed at a particular developmental need. The tasks are selected with regard to the individual child. These tasks are generally in the form of games and activities that give the child practice in grouping objects, naming parts of the body, counting, etc. Generally, however, the emphasis is on language development.

As most of the project's work is field-centered, both the staff and the facilities are set up for a home-based orientation. Although there is a director responsible for all phases of project management, the majority of the staff are parent educators. The only facility required by the project is sufficient office space. To date, Project Home Base is currently housed in an unused portion of an elementary school.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the most important considerations for a program of this type involve the pre and inservice training of the paraprofessional parent educators. Two approaches are employed: training individuals and training parent educators as a group.

Role playing of the tasks and teaching behaviors before going out in the field helps parent educators gain confidence.

It is important that the parent is taught how to use the tasks and games, as the thrust of the program is to enhance the parent's role as teacher rather than as observer of the child.

VITAL STATISTICS

The estimated cost of initial implementation of a home intervention/parent education program, serving 200 parents and 300 preschool-age children, is somewhat less than $6,600.

This includes training and equipment but does not cover salaries.

It is difficult to project exact cost figures for potential adaptors of this program. Factors like the number of families to be served, the distances to be covered, the services provided by the local school district (e.g., administrative services, evaluation service, etc.), the level of developmental costs, and local price and wage levels will all vary widely and will affect the ongoing maintenance costs.

EVALUATION

In 1972, tests administered to children who participated in Project Home Base indicated that their levels of achievement were substantially higher than those of children who had not been involved in Home Base or any other home intervention/parent education program.

Another indication of the success of Project Home Base is that parents report marked improvement in their children's language, perceptual, or intellectual skills. Evidence for this is shown in the children's mastery of 92.5 percent of the learning tasks.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Carol Jackson

Project Home Base

Yakima School District #7

104 N. 4th Avenue

Yakima, Washington 98902

PROJECT TELEPAC

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
LOGAN, UTAH

A specially developed curriculum provides parents with a set of procedures for teaching their severely handicapped child in the home. Twenty-two packages covering academic skills, self-help skills, and leisure time activities have been developed. Toll-free WATS lines provide for direct contact with a project master teacher for securing supportive services. When possible, a local program monitor in the rural community keeps track of individuals' progress in using the packaged curriculum. Additional materials available to parents include a collection of "how-to" books and pamphlets and a collection of multi-media materials, all of which are provided free of charge.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

A major problem in teaching or helping the handicapped homebound child in rural areas is the lack of specialized facilities. In urban areas, the population is often large enough to support a centralized facility which can provide specialized personnel and services for the handicapped child. The amount of time and distance required to travel in some

rural areas makes it difficult to have centralized facilities available to these children. TELEPAC is a service delivery model which relies on parent cooperation, use of telephones, and instructional packages.

History of Development

In developing the different components of the program, a number of factors had to be considered. Among these were (1) how to best utilize local and family resources, (2) how to overcome some of the problems associated with instruction in rural areas, despite limited funds, facilities, and availability of professionals, and (3) how to develop a highly individualized approach, particularly for the severely handicapped child whose response capabilities are impaired.

Project TELEPAC is attempting to construct a model which will offer solutions to some of these problems.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The program depends on a central source of administrative and instructional management. This is called the Homebound Handicapped Resource Center (HHRC) and includes a parent resource library, curriculum resource unit, multimedia collection, and extensive telephone system.

The center is located in the Exceptional Child Center at Utah State University and serves as the base for program development and service.

The curriculum resource unit develops and disseminates the Parent Involvement Packages. Each package outlines a format for introducing and teaching an unmastered skill. Parent Involvement Packages have been written in the areas of arithmetic, language arts, self-help skills, and recreation.

A set of books and pamphlets to supplement the training needs of parents is available in the parent resource library. These materials are selected to give practical information and suggestions.

The multimedia collection provides parents with materials to supplement their involvement packages. The collection consists of slide/sound sets, films, records, tapes, and supporting pencil/paper materials that suggest useful techniques for teaching a severely handicapped child.

A Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS) line provides for a variety of interactions between the parent, the resource center, a local program monitor (LPM), and a variety of consultant services. Using standard telephones equipped with intercom speakers is consistent with the resources available in rural areas.

Many of the interactions between the resource center and the home are taken over by a local program monitor. The center attempts to encourage local expertise, independence, and resource development at the local level.

Typically, parents call the HHRC resource teacher to request information or help or order a book from the library.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

The parent involvement packages may be implemented in a variety of educational settings without additional supportive services. The resource library and the multimedia collection are also resources that can be set up independent of other components.

A description of specific considerations will be completed, based on data from project sites in North Dakota and Virginia. This manual will include specific suggestions for implementing parts of the program as independent practices or in a variety of combinations. These specifications will be available in June 1976.

VITAL STATISTICS

In June 1974, Project TELEPAC was funded by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped for a two-year period, at a rate of $180,000 per year. Startup and operational costs will be considerably less than those needed for development. Although a precise description of operational costs will need to await the results of project replications in North Dakota and Virginia, a rough estimate of startup costs is approximately $3,600. This includes the installation of the WATS line and multimedia collection and putting together 22 parent involvement packages. Additional costs would include salaries and costs for duplication of materials, as well as monthly usage figures for the WATS line.

EVALUATION

The project is now beginning its second year and controlled evaluation data have not yet been fully collected. Data collected to date, however, are strongly supportive of the program.

A number of parents participating in Project TELEPAC were recently interviewed. The results of these interviews suggest that not only are the packages achieving their goals in the specific areas under instruction, but that parents are using the techniques to teach their children additional skills.

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KINDERGARTEN READINESS PACKET

GRASS VALLEY GRADE SCHOOL
GRASS VALLEY, OREGON

The Kindergarten Readiness Packet was designed to encourage parents to teach their children skills which would help them enjoy a successful kindergarten experience. Many parents do prepare their children adequately; however, many hesitate for fear of teaching the wrong way. Central to the use of the packet is the idea that parents using these materials will spend more time with their children.

The Kindergarten Readiness Packet offers suggestions for enhancing a child's awareness of the surrounding world, practicing auditory memory skills, and giving children practice in writing letters and numbers. Each packet contains games, booklets, and magazines and is available throughout Sherman County.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

The majority of the parents in Sherman County have had adequate educational experiences themselves. However, they hesitate to prepare their children for the first school experience because they lack the necessary materials and ideas to do this. The Kindergarten Readiness Packet was

designed to give these parents a few hints on how to teach their 4- and 5-year-olds skills that will result in a successful kindergarten experience.

Rural communities often lack opportunities (nursery schools, day care centers, etc.) for preschool children to interact in social situations with other children. As a result, these children often lack confidence in a group. Giving the child a preview of kindergarten activities can help to build his or her self-image.

History of Development

Throughout six years of teaching kindergarten and primary grades in Grass Valley, Oregon, it became apparent to the project's developer that parents were not adequately preparing their children for school.

The inspiration for the Kindergarten Readiness Packet occurred during the 1974-75 school year when the program's developer attended a teacher training session. As part of the class project, she began to compile a list of materials and resources which would help parents in the community prepare their children for school.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Mothers of preschool children were invited to the Grass Valley Grade School to receive the packet and have its application and use explained to them. Next year's (1976-1977) kindergarten students from the district also received packets at this time.

The packet includes a brief letter of introduction for the parents and a list of general and physical characteristics which the child should acquire before or shortly after school entrance. The list was taken from Teach Your Child to Talk: A Parent Handbook.

Four areas for practicing auditory memory are included for the parent to use with the child. These include nursery rhymes, songs, singing games, and finger plays. Only a few items are selected for use in each category. The selections are chosen to emphasize the parents' knowledge of the materials and to encourage the use of as many items as possible. The finger plays not only include training for auditory memory, but they help the children learn to count.

Charts are included for coloring. They are composed of squares and lists to help acquaint the child with the different kinds of colors (primary, secondary, black, white, etc.).

To help parents teach their children to write names and numbers, mimeographed pages showing the correct letter formation of the upper and lower case alphabet are included, as well as pages showing the formation of numerals zero (0) through nine (9).

Houghton Mifflin's booklet, Your Child and Reading--How You Can Help, is included, and parents are urged to read it and follow suggestions.

Also in the packet are a number of games for children, dot-to-dots, coloring pages, and copies of Scholastic Magazine's, Let's Find Out.

The packets contain a minimum of materials. However, parents will spend considerable time with their children if these items are used.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

The Kindergarten Readiness Packet was designed for a rural "Middle America." This area is not disadvantaged and is mostly populated by stable families with normal, active children. The parents can and usually do provide their children with many enriching experiences when given encouragement, suggestions, a few materials, and resources. These parents simply need to know that they can teach their children, resulting in more one-to-one parent-child contact.

The program initiator should be available to answer questions and supply additional resources. Besides having a general knowledge of the children's backgrounds and home situations, good communication between the parents and the program initiator is essential. Parents need to be reminded that their child is an individual; therefore, packet materials may or may not be appropriate for each child. It is important to caution parents not to push or panic about a child's development. Time and encouragement are the two most favorable points.

VITAL STATISTICS

The cost of the program was absorbed by the Grass Valley School District. Preparation of the packet format was an

individual effort, with cooperation from the Grass Valley School Board, administration, faculty, and staff. Faculty members volunteered their time in production of the packet.

Unlisted references used are teacher-made materials, nursery rhymes, and familiar songs and singing games. Duplicating masters for the alphabet are available through Continental Press. The numerals used are from Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

EVALUATION

At present, comments from satisfied parents are the primary evidence of the success of the packets. It is anticipated that within two years, measurable evidence of the program will be apparent.

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PROJECT EARLY-IN

UNION COUNTY INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION DISTRICT
LA GRANDE, OREGON

Early identification of learning disabilities is one of the primary goals of the Early Intervention Project for Children and Parents (EARLY-IN). Funded by Title III in behalf of six Union County school districts, the project provides county-wide early identification of these disabilities and intervention through a home instruction process. Diagnostic identification is conducted through group screenings. After the target population is identified, paraprofessional home trainers visit families in the community and prescribe techniques and materials geared to each child's needs. At the conclusion of the home instruction period, tests are administered to measure gains in developmental skill areas.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

Union County is a rural area composed of several school districts too small to implement effective and comprehensive early childhood programs. Preschool programs in the county consist of Head Start, with an enrollment of 15, and the Eastern Oregon State College laboratory school program, with

an enrollment of 50. Both programs are located within the city of La Grande. In other areas of the county, the number of private, preschool programs has grown over the past two years, but because they rely heavily on tuition fees for operation, many children cannot afford to attend. These programs also cover a wide variety of methodology, teacher training, and facilities.

In the past, many children in Union County have entered first grade with no readiness experience at all. Through the efforts of the EARLY-IN project, these children, and children with learning or physical handicaps who are identified as high risks, will be able to acquire the needed developmental skills for a successful school experience.

History of Development

In 1971, the Union County Intermediate Education District (IED) received funds to finance in-depth testing of a small group of preschoolers, with a six-week, followup home instruction program. The approach proved successful and a screening program for 4- and 5-year-old children was later developed with prescriptive activities and home teaching plans.

These early efforts were assisted with materials from federal projects which had been funded under the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program. While none of the models exactly fit Union County's needs, each program suggests useful components.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The EARLY-IN staff is composed of six members who are selected on the basis of their experience in working with young children.

Project staff are required to participate in two weeks of intensive inservice training at the start of the project year. One day per week is used throughout the year for further training as specific needs are expressed.

Eligible children throughout the county are identified. In widespread and intensive local media coverage, parents of preschool children are urged to contact the IED office.

Once a list of eligible children is established, a form letter is sent to each parent explaining the purpose and value of diagnostic screenings and requesting their participation. Accompanying the letter is an invitation for the child which gives the time and location of the screening party.

The diagnostic screenings, scoring, and dissemination of results require approximately three months. The screening tests cover the areas of vocabulary, color identification, figure drawing, counting, reproducing shapes, and visual and auditory discrimination. Besides testing the children, staff members assess motor development, speech and language development, and vision. Each screening concludes with stories and finger plays. Children receive IED Club buttons and party favors. This party atmosphere helps create a non-pressured testing situation for the child.

Parents attend group meetings conducted by the project coordinator. Explanations of test results are offered, as well as information on early childhood development and growth. In scoring the results, if a child performs below chronological age expectancy in four or more test areas, he or she becomes a candidate for prescriptive instruction.

Following these activities, the home instruction phase of the project begins. Home trainers' assignments vary according to number of severe cases and the geographical location. Travel time is a factor in case assignment because of the long distances required to reach some of the children's homes.

Parents are contacted by the home trainer and an appointment is made for the purpose of explaining the screening results. On the initial home visit, parental commitment is obtained, observations are made on the child's family background, and goals for the instructional program are set.

Each week, the home trainer visits the parent and child to deliver materials, demonstrate teaching techniques, and check the child's progress. Materials are prescribed sequentially by skill area and focus upon the weaknesses indicated in the child's screening test.

These materials are prepared by the project coordinator from a variety of sources. The home trainers are responsible for selecting materials which will meet the needs of the individual child. Parents receive the materials, carry out the instructions, and assess their child's performance.

At the conclusion of the home instruction program, the children are posttested with the same screening test and gains are recorded on a second profile. Recommendations are made regarding the child's learning pace and ability. If special services are needed in addition to home instruction, referrals are made to the proper agency.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

Facilities, materials, and staff selection are the most critical areas of concern. The EARLY-IN staff is housed in the Union County IED building, and facilities for screenings range from church basements to elementary school libraries.

It is important to communicate accurate information about the intents and purposes of the project. Testing young children is controversial in many areas and it is critical to clear up any misinterpretations. It is imperative that project objectives be defined and effectively communicated through the community.

VITAL STATISTICS

While a detailed cost analysis has not been established to date, Title III ESEA funds are currently being used for project operation. The project has operated in the past on a budget of $15,000; however, this requires using volunteers in many instances. Instructional salaries comprise the major portion of the budget.

EVALUATION

Reports indicate that project objectives are being accomplished and that project goals, processes, and outcomes appear to be entirely compatible with the needs and expectations of the community. Unanimous support of the EARLY-IN project from every district in Union County is the best indication of success.

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group teaching practices in rural areas

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TRAINING MIGRANT PARAPROFESSIONALS IN THE BILINGUAL MINI HEAD START PROGRAM

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
EPHRATA, WASHINGTON

The purpose of this project is twofold: Bilingual migrant adults are trained to teach young children, and educational day care services are provided on a continuing basis for the children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The training is done on a daily, on-the-job basis by professionals who provide a crash course during the slack season to the teacher-trainees, many of whom have had minimal formal education. Evaluations have shown that children who have participated in the project show marked improvement in language competency, preschool concepts, math, handwriting and reading.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

The Bilingual Mini Head Start Program was developed to address several issues regarding educational services for migrant children. These centered around providing educational continuity to children whose parents were continually on the move, by using the adults who travel with them to provide that continuity, without sacrificing quality. It is also important to deal with some of the long-range issues and

benefits in a program that is designed to be short-term and localized.

History of Development

In 1968, a Head Start study determined that very few migrant preschool children actually got enrolled in Head Start programs or attended sessions for more than 25 days. The migrant work season (April through October) coincided with the period of program operation, and because of the need for migrant families to travel during this time, many unsuccessful attempts were made to re-establish these pre-school children in other educational activities or programs.

The Bilingual Mini Head Start Program was launched in 1971 and concentrates on training migrant adults to teach the preschool children among groups of families travelling together. It was found that this procedure enables the children to take part in a continuous educational system, capable of delivering individualized instruction in remote and geographically disparate locations to both pre-school and school-age youngsters.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Each migrant teacher is trained to be responsible for the care and education of six children. It is their job to give the children their meals (breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack), as well as daily lessons in arithmetic, reading and language (both English and Spanish). Cultural

heritage is stressed, along with cooperative and creative play activities, and basic good health habits.

Along with the teacher-trainee, each center includes a Site Coordinator who is responsible for general operations. This person keeps records, locates space, determines licensing requirements, arranges for supplies, meetings, and parent contacts, as well as necessary support staff, such as cooks and drivers.

Also at the site is a professional trainer who works with the migrant trainees until they are capable of working with the children on their own. In addition to an intensive, off-season training program that concentrates on in-service techniques and the development of specific teaching skills, which can be accomplished while they are settled in one place, the trainees are enrolled in two classes in early childhood education at a community college. The trainees begin work with the children at the same time training is going on.

The project as a whole is administered by a Project Manager and the Director of Education. These persons are responsible for matters regarding funding and educational supervision. The project also relies on the services of an evaluator to observe the progress of both the children and the teacher-trainees.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

The greatest concern in an interstate program is finding a source of funds. If the migrant group stays within one state, funding problems will be minimal. However, most migrants do not confine themselves to one state and this fact often makes it difficult to obtain state or local funding. With most federal funding, certain guidelines must be followed, such as setting up a parent advisory committee or policy council to help select the teacher-trainees, following certain procedures for determining eligibility, or keeping records in a particular way.

Another consideration is to find the right target population with migrancy patterns that fit the program. When clusters of families with six or more children are found that generally follow the same patterns, trainees can be recruited who will also follow that pattern.

Adequate training methods must be developed. In this project, the teachers are trained through the use of demonstrations, role playing, lectures, and discussions. Individual conferences with the trainer are also useful.

In order to make the programs responsive to the needs of the individual sites, the project has developed products in the following categories: training materials, teaching manuals, testing instruments, curriculum materials, and management instruments.

VITAL STATISTICS

Although specific cost analysis will most likely not be available until the last quarter of the 1976 fiscal year, sources of funds will be needed for the following:

Project administration

Day care services to children

Training

Parent and/or community involvement

Materials development

Evaluation

During the 1975-1976 project year, one of the objectives is to do a detailed analysis of costs so that accurate information will be available.

A preliminary analysis has revealed that the cost per child for all of the above considerations is roughly $3,000 per year. However, this figure includes a great deal of developmental and trial-and-error cost which need not be incurred by an adopting agency.

EVALUATION

The project has been nationally recognized as being highly effective. Statistical evidence indicates that project students have demonstrated superiority in nationwide standardized testing in the areas of language competency, preschool concepts, math, handwriting, and reading.

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SOUTH DOUGLAS COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROJECT

SOUTH UMPQUA SCHOOL DISTRICT
MYRTLE CREEK, OREGON

The objectives of this early childhood education model are (1) to provide appropriate learning experiences for three-, four-, and five-year-olds in cognitive, psychomotor, and affective areas, (2) to provide individual learning programs for handicapped children, and (3) to provide group learning experiences for the project children. To achieve these objectives, the program relies on bi-weekly home visits by paraprofessionals who distribute activity packets and learning materials to parents. In addition, the project staff conducts centrally located group activities, called "reading parties," every six weeks for parents and children, and a four-week (half day) summer school for incoming first graders who participated in the project.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

An assessment of the educational needs of children in the South Douglas County area indicated that a high percentage of students were entering school with performance abilities in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas far below the level of expectation for entering first graders.

A more formalized study conducted the following year showed that from one third to one half of the children in grades 1, 2, and 3 were performing within the lowest quartile in basic language and mathematical skill areas and that the drop-out rate of high school students ranged from 11 to 25 percent over the previous five years. As a result, the community decided that preschool education which directly involved the home was vital in alleviating future learning problems.

History of Development

A pilot program was implemented during the 1970-71 academic year. Its success led to a similar early childhood education program on a districtwide basis. The project was set up as a model which met two basic criteria. It had to be cost effective and it had to demonstrate improved student achievement in the basic skill areas.

Underlying the project is the assumption that parents can be effective teachers and that, in partnership with the schools, they can stimulate the educational growth and development of their children. The other basic intent of the project is to maximize the individual differences and capabilities of each child.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

An office was set up, central to the program area. Mothers from the district, who served as community coordinators, visited participating families every two weeks. They

distributed and explained the learning package, helping parents when necessary, and suggested other activities.

These community coordinators participated in two weeks of preservice training just prior to the beginning of the project operational year. In addition, weekly inservice training sessions were held throughout the year.

Besides the home visits, "reading parties" were held every six weeks for small groups (6-8 people) to develop the ability of children to work and learn in a group setting. Parents were given an opportunity to share their experiences in teaching their children with each other and with staff members.

The component of the program dealing with handicapped children used the same general process described above. Initially, the community coordinators visited the homes of these children two or three times a week. As parents and children became familiar with the learning package, home visits were then offered on a weekly basis. The children in this component were selected in terms of their educational skill deficiencies rather than physical ones. These deficiencies were identified by the parents and any special educational materials necessary were provided by the program.

The management staff consisted of a full-time project director, a supervisor of community coordinators, an evaluator, and a part-time curriculum designer. They provided the basic direction, development, and coordination of the project. Parents determined the kind of learning materials and the manner in which they were to be used.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

One of the most important considerations was developing a curriculum for the project. It was necessary to devise learning packages that could incorporate daily, family activities on an easily individualized basis and yet remain consistent with standard child development techniques.

The management staff compiled a base of materials for the project lessons. These materials were then organized into different categories and levels of skill development. A central consideration in compiling these materials was to prepare a curriculum that was enjoyable to teach and use. However, one problem was that the staff often lacked the theoretical and experiential background to develop the type of curriculum that met the individual needs of parents and children involved in the program.

During the second year of operation, "curriculum committees" were formed to comment upon and offer suggestions for modifying lessons and operations of the project. These committees were a vital link in establishing an educational partnership between the school and community. They also helped in addressing some of the development considerations mentioned earlier.

It was important to define the acceptable and unacceptable aspects of the curriculum. Some indication of the enthusiasm and interest of the participants was obtained from their many suggestions. These ideas were subsequently included on a separate page in the lesson packets.

VITAL STATISTICS

The capital outlay expense for the project is minimal. It is assumed that a building exists which the staff may use. The cost of curriculum materials, including both lesson activities and resource library materials, averages about $28 per year per child.

The model allows for more flexibility in terms of operation, time of participation, and learning experiences provided than is usually available in a more traditional type of preschool experience.

With respect to the shortcomings of this model, there is some difficulty in locating and assembling prepared curriculum materials which are directly applicable to a home teaching situation. Pretraining and on-the-job training are required for the paraprofessionals involved, and some means of transportation must be available for the community coordinators.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the performance of first grade children who had not been involved in a concerted preschool educational program indicates that there is considerable room for the learning of school-related skills at the preschool level. Children who participated in the early childhood education project for a given period of time showed statistically significant improvement in tests designed to measure program success.

It was also determined that there was a direct relationship between the length of the child's participation and the mastery of certain skills (cognitive, social, and psychomotor).

In the specialized component of the program dealing with handicapped children, accomplishments are somewhat more difficult to measure and project successes are on an individual basis. While there is a basic core of curriculum materials, the educational program designed for a particular child is highly personalized. For example, a child who had never walked is now able to take five steps by himself and a 3-year-old who only grunted or cried now has a speaking vocabulary of 15 words.

In a Parent Survey Questionnaire, parents from both components of the project expressed satisfaction. One survey revealed that over 85 percent of the respondents felt that most of the lessons were fun to teach and were enjoyed by their children.

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THE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

PLATTE CANYON SCHOOL DISTRICT, NO. 1
BAILEY, COLORADO

The Early Learning Program is directed toward meeting the educational needs of young children living in sparsely populated regions. Three centers were established in September 1974, within the Platte Canyon School District. Each center is used one morning per week for a program of preschool education, parent discussion, and education and child care for children under 3½ years. In addition, the parents are learning to cooperatively supervise play groups for the children.

High school students assist the parents and the professional staff, serving as aides in the preschool classes and providing child care for the infants and toddlers. These students receive instruction in child development and earn school credits, coordinated through the career education program in their high schools.

A van transports the teaching staff, equipment, and materials used in setting up the centers. Because the equipment is loaded on and off the van for each session, it has been carefully selected to be light-weight. Besides the materials for the Early Learning Program, it houses a lending library of toys, learning games, and parent education books.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

On the basis of achievement scores, it is evident that geographical and social isolation have prevented children in the Platte Canyon District from fully developing necessary learning and language skills. The project gives preschool children learning experiences in a non-school setting and will attempt to develop their cognitive, social and communication skills.

Because of the district's dispersed communities, low population density, and limited space facilities, traditional ways of providing a stimulating learning environment, such as establishing a set preschool center, have not been feasible.

The needs in the Platte Canyon were for educational resources that could convert community centers or homes into stimulating learning environments. It was also important for parents of preschool children to initiate learning activities in the home, and for all members of the community to develop and identify resources which will allow them to carry on the program when funding ends. The project directs attention to the training of the parent, as well as the child, and utilizes the resources of home and community as learning centers.

The state of Colorado has cited the need to provide children with more appropriate preschool experiences than are now available. Emphasis should be on combining community and

school resources and providing parent education for preventing and reducing school failure.

History of Development

During the 1972-1973 school year, the district's Accountability Committee identified the development of basic skills and proficiency in communication as major goals of district educational programs. Meetings were held to inform people and obtain their suggestions for the most effective procedures for obtaining these goals. Planning sessions, which included an outside consulting firm as well as parents, school personnel, and early childhood specialists, led to a proposal for an Early Childhood Program in the Platte Canyon School District.

In July 1974, after the proposal was approved, an early childhood specialist was hired as project coordinator. Later in the summer, a teacher was employed for the preschool component of the program. A van was purchased and customized. Materials were acquired and sites were identified. A summer program included preschool age children and parents who would be participants in the Early Learning Program.

When the program began in September, it became obvious that parents with very young children could not attend without bringing them along. Two high school students were added to the staff to serve as aides and help with child care. The students assumed increasing responsibility as they learned new methods of working with young children. They also participated in staff and planning sessions throughout the year.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Each of the three centers, a church, a private home, and a summer camp, was open for a parent, preschool, and child care program one day per week during the school year, 1974-1975. Approximately 50 parents (primarily mothers), 60 preschool children, and 20 toddlers attended the program. A group of 40 parents and their children were consistent in attendance and support. A total of 12 children per session was considered the optimal number for the staff.

The center opens on a typical day at 8 a.m. Two staff members and high school assistants do the necessary chores to get the center operating, such as setting up chairs, starting a fire to get the building warmed up, or unloading the van. As parents arrive, they help with unloading and setting up. Once this is completed, both parents and children are involved in an unstructured time to play or chat. Beginning the morning this way is designed to pro ide a transition from home to the group or school environment for both parents and children.

Later in the morning, the parents and the project coordinator meet to plan coming events and hear any special reports. A program or lesson is then presented which may include such topics as the developmental stages of children, sex education, how children learn, nutrition, etc.

During group activity, the parents join the children in the preschool area for observation and demonstrations from the early childhood specialist on ways to extend learning at

home. Children are allowed to take materials used during these lessons home to use with their parents.

Following group activity, the early childhood specialist discusses specific concerns with parents. The project coordinator helps the children with snack time, clean up, a story, and other activities. At 12:30, the van is loaded up and the session is over.

During the 1975-1976 school year, the proposal has been expanded to include the preparation of a manual for use by parents assuming leadership in the program. The staff is being expanded to two full-time positions to provide for preparation of the manual.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

The program was designed to have mandatory parent attendance. While parents of preschoolers in Platte Canyon were anxious to have their children participate in a school experience, there was some resistance to being required to attend themselves. At the same time, there was a need for a place for parents with young children to meet and there was no other organization in the community that provided this.

An advisory committee, composed of two representatives from each center, three community members, and representatives from the elementary school, helped people focus upon their objectives for the program.

There was a desire for the children to have more social interaction than one half-day session would permit.

Consequently, the staff is training parents to conduct play groups in the centers with the children on the day after the regular program.

It is important to recognize the need for active participation from the very beginning from parents and members of the community. It has been an evolving process in Platte Canyon for people to be ready to express commitment to this kind of program.

Other organizational details which must be considered are buying and customizing a van, selecting materials, finding sites, buying adequate insurance, setting up an advisory committee, and developing good working relationships within the community.

VITAL STATISTICS

During 1974-1975, the program was funded through ESEA Title III and NDEA. The total cost of the van and materials was approximately $8,500. Other expenses included salaries, fringe benefits, insurance, maintenance, consultants, travel expenses, and administrative costs. An additional school syste commitment was the use of school facilities as "home base."

The most significant increases for the 1975-1976 budget are provisions for the project assistant to work full time and for inservice training for parents and staff. The increased expenditure is planned to provide for preparing community residents to conduct the program with the help of only one professional. Thus, it is anticipated that the budget will decrease in the future.

Many community resource people have contributed to the program. The public health nurse has led a series of discussions on sex education, and health volunteers conducted screening for the children. The school speech therapist and psychologist have been available for referrals.

EVALUATION

The most obvious indication that the program is meeting the needs of the community is that participants attend regularly and that they are enthusiastic about the program. Growth in the children's development has been recorded throughout the year and the staff is pleased with these observations.

Tests given to children before and after their participation in the Early Learning Program indicate significant improvement. One goal is to find a test which can accurately assess all areas of growth.

A questionnaire given out to parents showed that they have gained an understanding of early childhood education and home application skills as a result of the program. A community questionnaire showed that residents of the Platte Canyon District are highly supportive of the Early Learning Program.

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Early Learning Program

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EVANSTON PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

EVANSTON SCHOOL DISTRICT
EVANSTON, WYOMING

The Evanston Pre-Kindergarten Program was developed as a result of parent involvement in the on-going community education program. The program stresses active parent involvement in developing readiness and social skills in preschool children. Classes are held in the elementary school under the auspices of the Evanston Community Education Corporation. In preschool groups, children hear stories, play together, and participate in language development, creative art, and other school readiness activites. Special assistance is provided in the way of tuition subsidies and home visits by the teacher.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

A large number of elementary school children in Evanston are functioning below grade level expectancy. This is a result of a variety of factors: emotional disturbance, mental retardation, cultural deprivation, poor classroom instruction, and lack of adequate social adjustment. School records indicate that approximately 37 percent of the incoming students suffer from one or more of these disorders. A rough survey found that 80 percent of the pre-kindergarten students had never had a story read to them by their parents.

History of Development

The state of Wyoming has no provisions for financial support for kindergarten programs and, as a result, existing ones in Evanston were insufficient to meet all the needs for preschool education in the community.

Initially, the Evanston Pre-Kindergarten Program was organized on a voluntary basis in conjunction with the Uinta County public library. The program provided preschool day care and learning experiences for approximately 65 children, two or three times a week. Eventually, community demand outgrew the facilities at the library and the program was moved to the elementary school.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

The main purpose of the project is to provide meaningful activities for preschool children, ages three to five, in order to develop skills needed in reading, math, and art during the primary grades. Parents are involved in school and in home teaching-counselling activities.

The program operates largely with volunteer labor. The only paid staff member is a certified elementary school teacher with training at the pre-kindergarten level.

Until recently, the program operated half-days, three times a week. However, a recent grant enables the teacher to be on full contract, and plans call for the program to operate full time, 10 months a year.

The program relies heavily on community volunteers and resources. Local residents have donated materials such as games, tables, sand boxes, etc., and others have volunteered their time telling stories, describing their jobs, or showing and explaining items of unusual interest.

One day each week is set aside for home visits by the teacher. The purpose of these visits is to encourage parents to work with their children in developing some of the necessary skills. The importance of home-centered education is stressed and parents are shown how to make simple toys and how to utilize inexpensive materials to enrich and stimulate their children at home.

The number of attendance days for a given child is determined by the parents and teacher. The enrollment fee for each child is $15 per month. In the case of low income families, the Division of Social Services pays tuition costs.

A snack is served by the school food service in mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Guest speakers for parents are provided during the afternoons and evening to encourage participation.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

Students who are not ready for the regular kindergarten are encouraged to attend the pre-kindergarten program. This results in a number of learning disabled and special education students participating in the program. Special assistance is

provided in the areas of speech and hearing, learning disabilities, and psychological services. The state mental hospital also cooperates in the delivery of special services.

Social services are made available for eligible participants through the local social service office and school.

To increase parent and community awareness of the program, a monthly newsletter is distributed throughout the area.

VITAL STATISTICS

Funding was arranged through state and local agencies. Besides the generous assistance of volunteer labor and local business contributions, financial resources used in supporting the program come from local matching funds, services and supplies from the school district, and federal and state funding through the Wyoming Community Services administration.

The county social service agency pays 50 cents per hour tuition for indigent families.

EVALUATION

Testing and evaluation of the program is conducted by an outside organization. Children are screened, using the Denver Development Screening Test and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to prescribe individualized instruction appropriate to the child's needs.

Although evaluation data are not precise, subjective evidence indicates that parents, teachers, and social service

representatives are satisfied with the children's progress and see it as a direct result of program participation.

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STRATEGIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY
WAUPUN, WISCONSIN

Upon entering kindergarten all students undergo a comprehensive screening program (which focuses on auditory and visual perception and motor and language development). Parents are selected and trained to administer the screening. The results of the screening help teachers plan individualized instruction, through the use of learning centers, teacher aides, and parent volunteers. Teachers organize their classrooms to enable children to work in a stimulating environment appropriate to their learning needs and offering self-selecting instructional materials.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

The maximum development of every child's potential has been one of the major goals of public education in the United States.

Educators are beginning to recognize the great importance of the early years of life in a person's total growth and development. Remedial efforts later in a child's life are more difficult and far less likely to succeed than efforts to influence the learning process and environment in the

early years. An effort should be made to identify and work with adjustment problems as soon as possible.

History of Development

From December 15, 1971, through December 15, 1973, Strategies in Early Childhood Education was funded through Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction. This project proved to be highly successful and was one of three Wisconsin ESEA Title III projects in 1973 to be nominated and receive national validation. During the 1974-1975 school year the project was funded as an ESEA Developer-Demonstrator Project.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Based on a developmental model, children are screened for early identification of learning needs. This assessment begins when the children enter kindergarten. Results of the screening are given to the classroom teachers who begin instruction at the appropriate level.

Instruction begins informally, with heavy emphasis on working independently and solving one's own problems in an environment created for selectivity and freedom. As children begin to work independently, learning centers are set up. The activities found in the learning centers or small group activities are selected by the teacher from a prescription guide according to each child's screening diagnosis. As activities within the centers are completed, children are allowed to work in other centers according to their interests.

Each objective in the program is behaviorally written to allow the teacher to observe the child's performance on an assigned activity. The child continues with these activities until he or she is unable to perform the next task. Instruction then begins with the assignment of new prescriptions. This procedure is repeated with every child on each level.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

The project has been operating in traditional self-contained classrooms as well as larger open-concept classrooms. Teachers have utilized many creative ideas in facilitating a learning environment.

Self-instructional materials are a valuable tool when implementing this program. Although their use is not imperative, cassette records, overhead projectors, etc., help promote program activities. The unusual application of the traditional materials and equipment found in any good kindergarten classroom has been a highlight of the project. Teachers have been able to adapt many games and activities to learning situations and now look at balls, puzzles, ropes, etc., as learning tools rather than toys. Children complete educational prescriptions through the use of toys.

VITAL STATISTICS

The project has been field tested and revised to the point where no additional costs for development of materials

are needed; however, staff development is vital to program success. The preservice and inservice needs could be completed in a minimum of 15 hours at an approximate cost of $500.

In addition to staff development, materials needed at the outset of the project are the screening materials, chart of performance objectives, record chart, and prescription guide. These materials and a few added supplies can be obtained at approximately $2 per pupil.

EVALUATION

The project stressed change in two basic areas: children's performance and teacher's attitudes towards individualized instruction.

The effect of the program on children has been impressive. When dealing with children individually, most negative behaviors have disappeared. With respect to improved achievement, five classes were randomly selected and tested. Results over a period of four years indicate that project students scored significantly higher on the Metropolitan Readiness Test than nonproject students.

An additional outcome not measured in the project was the positive change in teachers' attitudes toward individualized instruction.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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special
programs

CAPiT (CHILDREN AND PARENTS INVOLVED TOGETHER)

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY
PORTLAND, OREGON

CAPiT (Children and Parents Involved Together) revolves around parents as teachers and the home as a rich learning environment. The program offers parents alternative ways of working with preschool children and provides written materials and scenarios for coping with family problems. Families that want to be involved in the program schedule appointments with a specially trained home visitor who helps them work towards their own family goals. These families also have access to toys, books, and games for their children.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

Many rural communities lack adequate preschool educational opportunities. The distance between homes and the difficulty of travel make scheduled group meetings unrealistic. As a result, there are few nursery schools, parent cooperatives, or educational kindergartens readily available to rural children. Within rural homes the family unit is strong, offering great potential for early childhood development.

History of Development

This program was developed as part of a larger effort aimed at improving rural education. Other aspects of the program include inservice training for teachers, curriculum development, active community involvement, and new operational methods for support agencies and school organizations. CAPiT stresses family involvement in offering preschool educational opportunities in the home.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Families get involved in the CAPiT program with assistance from a home visitor who is a member of the community. As family members undertake a chosen project, the home visitor supports and encourages their efforts by practicing helpful behaviors during the visits. By consciously selecting a goal, planning how to reach it, and looking carefully at the results, parents guide their children's development. In later projects, the family will have a better idea of what worked for them the first time.

A typical family visit starts with introducing a new activity, game, or toy to the child. Time is then spent discussing what has happened since the last visit, planning for the week ahead, and examining and selecting useful resources. The home visitor makes notes of any concerns or materials and resources that are needed.

The program has available a certain number of toys, games, and books for the families. In addition sponsoring agencies, such as local school districts, establish Resource Lending Services that can provide a wide range of toys, games, pictures, even pets. These materials are designed to improve specific competencies in the child. The home visitor demonstrates their use and the parents use these materials to work with the child in areas such as reading, motor development, etc. A Resource Lending Service may be located in a storefront, a spare room in someone's home, a school library, or a mobile van.

The program relies on the services of a Project Coordinator who is responsible for the overall coordination and management of the program. This person sets up the Resource Lending Service, establishes links to community resources and agencies, and arranges for training the home visitors.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

Any incorporated group--capable of receiving and handling funds--is a potential user of the CAPiT program. This group might be administrators of a school district, members of a church, or a group of parents who have incorporated for that purpose. The major requirements are that the group should be able and willing to provide the services of a Project Coordinator, the resources needed by the home visitors, responsible fiscal management, and space for staff members.

Families in the community have to recognize their need for a program of this type and volunteer to participate in it.

A training program must be set up which includes experiences that are relevant to those encountered in home visits. Formal training is covered in 12 sessions that are spaced throughout the first cycle of family visits. Throughout training, emphasis is placed on a "Do-Look-Learn" approach. The materials used in training are designed to help the home visitor utilize existing marketed products.

Although CAPiT is directed towards preschoolers, there are no restrictions in the number or ages of children in a family who may participate. It is important to make all family members feel that they are welcome to take part in home visits.

VITAL STATISTICS

Potential adopters of the program need to consider costs for training, travel, setting up a Resource Lending Service, and purchasing office equipment and supplies. A training program which includes 30 to 40 families for a two-month cycle of home visits would cost approximately $4,000. A basic collection of materials for the Resource Lending Service to serve the same number of families would cost approximately $1,000. Additional costs for housing the CAPiT office, providing program materials, and meeting extra personnel and consultant needs might be covered through volunteer services and contributions.

EVALUATION

Although the program is still in testing stages, results from test communities indicate that CAPiT has been successful in meeting its objectives.

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INFANT EDUCATION PROJECT

WEBER STATE COLLEGE
OGDEN, UTAH

An expanding body of research is pointing to the infancy period as the time when the child's self-concept, curiosity, and feelings about the world take root. Although there are many excellent preschool programs all across the country, there are relatively few which focus on the parent-child relationship during the early years of the child's development. The Infant Education Project provides this focus for parents of children, newborn to three years. This project will attempt to develop appropriate curriculum materials and strategies for instructing parents of infants and determining the effects of the curriculum on the children's development and on their parents' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

ANTECEDENTS

Needs

An expanding body of research points out that the roots of the child's intellectual development, self-concept, relationships with parents, and curiosity about the world in general all have their foundations in earliest infancy. This research indicates the importance of the first three

years of life in preparing the child for learning when he or she enters school. A need exists for a program which will bridge the educational gap for parents of very young children. The Infant Education Project attempts to provide parents with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

History of Development

In January 1972, a senior child development student at Weber State College requested a community placement which would offer an opportunity to work in some way with newborn infants and their mothers. Arrangements were made for the student to come in and visit with the new mothers to explain the development and learning capacities of the newborn child. This assistance and information had not previously been available to parents in this area from any other source.

This experience was so successful that Weber State College began to place other students in similar situations. Eventually, nearly every mother who delivered at one of the local hospitals was contacted. In order to support parents beyond the hospital visit and to develop a curriculum for parents to use with their infants, funding was requested for a parent education project.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Parent contact begins during the postpartum hospital stay. Mothers are contacted by an Infant Educator between 8 and 24 hours following delivery. During these visits the

Infant Educator leaves information with the mother and later discusses simple activities that parents may find helpful to use with their child.

Parents are contacted again at home when their baby is two weeks old. This contact re-establishes the rapport between the parents and the Infant Educator and an appointment is made for a home visit.

During the home visit the Infant Educator presents and discusses curriculum materials for parents of infants in specific age groups. This curriculum is in the form of a printed brochure.

Three other contacts are made during the child's first year. These contacts are in the form of workshops which are held in one of the community schools. In this way parents and educators can work together for the most complete development of each child. These workshops coincide with curriculum presentations geared to particular age groups (six months, one year, etc.).

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION

An informal approach is most successful. Occasionally, new mothers are tired or in pain and the visit should be kept brief. At other times, they may be feeling bored and lonely, and these visits should be much longer. There is no set length of time for these initial visits. It should be mentioned, however, that if mothers are not interested, they should be left alone.

Infant Educators follow each hospital's code of ethics for volunteers. We have found that staff members are more likely to feel at ease when they have taken part in some hospital orientation or training. Any group implementing a program of this nature would want to be sure that the lines of communication between the project and hospital are kept open.

Home visits are best kept short--approximately one hour. This is ample time to present the curriculum and include other children in the home visit. If home visits are made during the early evening hours it is possible to include the father.

Although this project is presently located on a college campus it could be easily implemented through existing school systems.

All written materials are offered at a sixth grade readability level.

VITAL STATISTICS

The Infant Education Project is currently funded by the Utah State Board of Education. Since there is a large research component the budget last year was $22,000. It would be possible, however, to conduct the project at an approximate cost of $25 per family for the first year or 18 months.

EVALUATION

It is necessary to consider a five-year span for evaluating this project. The pilot and research studies must follow the chronological growth of the child. Evaluation of the curriculum involves determining parents' progress after exposure to project materials.

Since the ultimate goal of this program is to enhance the development of the child (birth to three years), available instruments such as the Bayley Scales of Mental and Motor Development will be employed to measure development growth.

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utilizing this information

UTILIZING THIS INFORMATION

If you have been looking for ideas in early childhood education, the practices collected here have probably given you some suggestions. After all, they were selected because they "work." For a number of reasons, however, you should not infer that they will necessarily work in your community. First, there is no way for your community to replicate the exact history of events that created the particular set of circumstances that brought about each of these projects. Secondly, each of the projects reported in this booklet was developed to satisfy an identified set of needs that are more or less peculiar to the characteristics of the community and school settings in which they operate. Your community presents yet another unique setting. However, it is hoped that these promising early childhood education practices might provide some helpful examples of what might be accomplished in your community and that they might stimulate you to develop comparable programs that are uniquely suited to your own local needs.

When effecting change in rural communities and schools it is important that there be broad involvement and active participation of parents, teachers, children, and citizens. Sad experience has shown that when new programs are implemented without such broad participation, they seldom last beyond the tenure of their principal advocate. Once goals have been agreed upon and the problems related to reaching

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these goals have been identified and analyzed, the group that offers solutions will hopefully find such a publication as "Early Childhood Education: Promising Practices in Rural Areas" a helpful resource.

The promising practices described in this collection are not recipes for improving early childhood educational opportunities in rural schools, but hopefully they contain some very good ideas for getting started.